

## Chapter GAB 20

### COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

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**Note:** Chapter GAB 20 has been superseded by s. 5.05 (2m), Wis. Stat., and is no longer effective, except for complaints alleging a violation of election laws by a local election official under s. 5.06, Wis. Stat.

**Note:** Chapter ElBd 10 was renumbered chapter GAB 20 under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 1., Stats., and corrections made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 2., 6. and 12., Stats., Register April 2008 No. 628.

**GAB 20.01 Applicability.** This chapter applies to complaints filed with the government accountability board pursuant to ss. 5.05, 5.06, 11.60 (5) and 11.66, Stats., requesting the government accountability board to enforce the election and campaign finance laws. This chapter does not apply to complaints to challenge to nomination papers or petitions which are filed under s. GAB 2.05 or 2.11.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94; correction made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 7., Stats., Register April 2008 No. 628.

**GAB 20.02 Definitions.** As used in this chapter:

(1) “Board” means the government accountability board.

(2) “Complainant” means an elector, a committee or a group filing a matter with the board under this chapter.

(3) “Director” means a person duly appointed by the board or any employee of the agency to whom a lawful function has been delegated by the director to administer and manage the agency.

(4) “Probable cause” means the facts and reasonable inferences that together are sufficient to justify a reasonable, prudent person, acting with caution, to believe that the matter asserted is probably true.

(5) “Respondent” means a person, committee, or a group whose decisions or actions may be brought before the board on complaint for review under this chapter.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.

**GAB 20.03 Filing.** (1) All complaints, answers and replies shall be in writing and shall be sworn to before a person authorized to administer oaths.

(2) The form of the complaint, answer or reply should, but is not required to, follow the format prescribed herein:

#### State of Wisconsin Before the Government Accountability Board

The Complaint of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ , Complainant  
against \_\_\_\_\_ , Respondent <sup>1</sup>

#### COMPLAINT

This complaint is under \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert the applicable section(s) of law in chs. 5 to 12, Stats., if known) <sup>2</sup>

I (Insert the complainant’s name), allege that (Set forth in detail the facts that establish probable cause to believe that a violation occurred. Use as many separate pages as needed.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complainant’s signature)

I (complainant’s name), being first duly sworn on oath state that I personally read the above complaint, and that the above allegations are true based on my personal knowledge and, as to those stated on information and belief, I believe them to be true.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(complainant’s signature)

STATE OF WISCONSIN )  
 ) ss.  
County of \_\_\_\_\_),  
(county of notarization)

Sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of person authorized to administer oaths)

My commission expires \_\_\_\_\_, or is permanent  
Notary Public or (official title if not notary)

<sup>1</sup> Substitute complaint, answer or reply, as the case may be, and make the appropriate changes throughout the document.

<sup>2</sup> A statutory basis is not required for an answer or reply.

(3) The complaint shall specify the statutory basis for the complaint and shall set forth the facts which are alleged to establish probable cause. Information which may establish probable cause includes allegations that set forth which persons are involved; what those persons are alleged to have done; where the activity is believed to have occurred; when the activity is alleged to have occurred and who are the witnesses to the events. The complaint shall be signed by the complainant or by an individual acting as the complainant's representative.

(4) The complaint shall state the name and last known post office address of the complainant and the respondent.

(5) The complainant, not the complainant's representative, shall verify the allegations of the complaint. The complainant verifies the complaint by signing a statement under oath before a notary public or other person authorized to administer oaths. The verification statement, or a statement to the same effect, shall state as follows:

"I, (complainant's name), being first duly sworn upon oath, state that I personally read the above complaint and that the above allegations are true and correct based on my personal knowledge and, as to those allegations stated on information and belief, I believe them to be true."

The verification shall be placed at the bottom of the complaint.

(6) The complainant shall mail to, or personally serve on, the respondent a copy of the complaint no later than the time of filing the complaint with the Board and shall certify to that service on the complaint or in a cover letter filed with the complaint. Each party shall mail to, or personally serve on, each other party any subsequent pleading before filing the pleading with the board and shall certify to the service on the pleading or in a cover letter filed with the pleading.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.

**GAB 20.04 Investigations.** (1) Any matter brought to the board shall be reviewed by the director who shall determine within 10 business days whether the complaint is timely, is sufficient as to form and states probable cause.

(2) If the complaint does not meet the standards under sub. (1), the director shall promptly return the complaint to the complainant, without prejudice unless otherwise provided by law, specifying both the defect in the complaint and the information appropriate to cure the defect. A copy of the director's letter to the complainant shall be provided to the respondent.

(3) If the complaint meets the standards under sub. (1) as applied to complaints under ss. 5.05 and 11.60 (5), Stats., the director shall promptly forward the complaint to the respondent at the respondent's last known post office address. The respondent shall file with the board a verified, written answer within 10 business days. After receiving the answer, the director shall promptly forward the answer to the complainant at the complainant's last known post office address. The complainant may file a written, verified reply to the answer within 10 business days.

(4) After receiving an answer that makes any counterclaim against the complainant, the director shall promptly forward the counterclaim to the complainant. The complainant shall file a written, verified answer to the counterclaim within 10 business days. After receiving the complainant's answer, the director shall promptly forward the answer to the respondent for a written, verified reply to be filed within 10 business days.

(5) The director has the discretion to extend by not more than an additional 10 business days, the time for the complainant or respondent to file any responsive pleading. A business day is any day that the agency is open for business.

(6) If the complaint meets the standards under sub. (1), as applied to complaints under ss. 5.06 and 11.66, Stats., the director shall proceed as the board authorizes by duly adopted motion and,

where no motion is in effect, the director shall proceed after consultation with the board's chair.

(7) A party that fails to obtain an extension of time to respond pursuant to sub. (2), or who fails to respond within 10 business days to a pleading mailed to the party's last known post office address that is not returned to the board, may be deemed to have admitted each allegation contained in the pleading, and to have accepted any other consequences for failing to respond to a pleading.

(8) The time period for filing an answer or reply begins 3 business days after the date of the transmittal letter from the director. An answer or reply will be treated as filed based on the postmark of the envelope transmitting the pleading.

(9) After all pleadings are filed under ss. 5.05 and 11.60 (5), Stats., the director shall analyze the pleadings, present them, with appropriate recommendations, to the Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting, or at the most immediate meeting thereafter at which the matter can be heard if the matter cannot be heard at the next regularly scheduled meeting, and forward a copy of the analysis and recommendations to the complainant and respondent within a reasonable time before the board meeting at which the matter will be considered.

(10) After all pleadings are filed under ss. 5.06 and 11.66, Stats., the director shall proceed as the board authorizes by duly adopted motion or, where no motion is in effect, the director shall proceed after consultation with the board's chair. Where the board has delegated to the director the authority to resolve complaints, the director shall issue an order making findings and resolving the complaint.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94; corrections in (3) and (9) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 7., Stats., Register April 2008 No. 628.

**GAB 20.05 Board meetings.** (1) The board shall review the analysis and recommendations of its director with respect to pleadings filed under ss. 5.05 and 11.60 (5), Stats., at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

(2) Any party may submit a written statement of facts approved by the director for consideration by the board.

(3) Personal appearances, limited to 10 minutes per party plus additional time to respond to questions from board members and staff, are permitted at each meeting of the board. A complainant shall make the first presentation and the respondent shall make the second presentation. No rebuttal or extension of time will be allowed unless specifically provided by the board.

(4) Parties may provide a written argument or brief in support of their positions. Such arguments or briefs are limited to 5 pages, single spaced on one side of a sheet of paper. Parties submitting written material to the board must submit 12 copies to the director no later than 3 business days before the board meeting at which the matter will be considered.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94; correction in (1) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 7., Stats., Register April 2008 No. 628.

**GAB 20.06 Hearings.** (1) Before issuing a final decision or order on the merits of a complaint filed with the board under this chapter, the board or its director shall conduct an evidentiary hearing, under ch. 227, Stats., if either of the following occurs:

(a) In the board's judgement, a hearing is necessary in the interest of justice and a material question of fact exists.

(b) A hearing is expressly required by statute.

(2) Before issuing a final decision or order on the merits of a complaint filed with the board under this chapter, the board or its director may conduct an evidentiary hearing, under ch. 227, Stats., when:

(a) The board concludes that facts exist which have not been presented and which may tend to resolve the dispute.

(b) The board, in its discretion, determines that an evidentiary hearing is appropriate.

(3) Except in the case of an emergency, the board shall provide the parties with at least 10 days written notice of a hearing stating the date, the time, and the place of the hearing, the nature of the case, and a general statement of the issues to be heard. The parties may, with the consent of the board, waive the right to notice. Continuances or postponements may be granted by the director only in the case of exceptional circumstances entirely beyond the control of the party requesting the continuance or postponement and only upon notice to the director given at least 3 days before the hearing.

(4) The board, or the director, or a hearing examiner proceeding under ch. 227, Stats., may preside over the hearing. The board may, by duly adopted motion of the board or by an order issued before taking any testimony, direct that the director's or the hearing examiner's decision be final as to the merits of the matter. Subject to the provisions of this chapter, the director or hearing examiner shall have the powers specified in s. 227.46 (1), Stats.

(5) Based upon the law applicable to the type of proceeding the board is required to conduct, the parties appearing at the hearing shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to be represented by counsel, to call witnesses, to present evidence, and to confront and cross examine adverse witnesses. The statutory and common law rules of evidence shall not be binding as to issues of admissibility. The director or hearing examiner may admit all testimony having reasonable probative value, but shall exclude irrelevant, immaterial or unduly repetitious testimony. No material finding of fact shall be made unless supported by competent evidence in the record.

(6) All testimony at the hearing shall be given under oath and shall be recorded by a stenographer or a recording machine, but need not be transcribed unless a party requests a transcript and pays any costs required to prepare a transcript.

(7) All decisions following a hearing shall be in writing and shall set forth, in relevant detail, the findings of fact and conclusions of law. A decision shall be served on the parties by mailing a copy to each party's last known post office address.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.

**GAB 20.07 Withdrawal and settlement.** (1) At any time before the issuance of a final decision, a complainant may file with the board a written request to withdraw his or her complaint, specifying the reasons for the request. Upon receiving such a request, the board may, but is not required to, issue an order dis-

missing the matter with or without prejudice. If the board decides not to dismiss the case, the board may take any appropriate action, within its authority, that the board determines will serve the public interest.

(2) The parties to proceedings under this chapter may not settle disputed matters by compromise and conciliation without the consent of the board, except where the settlement is authorized by law. Upon receiving written notice that settlement has been proposed, the board may, at its next regularly scheduled meeting, consider the proposal as the board deems appropriate.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.

**GAB 20.08 Diligent action; dismissals.** (1) The board shall proceed promptly and diligently to decide cases under this chapter.

(2) If a party fails to appear at a hearing, the board, the director, or the hearing examiner may proceed with the hearing, provided that due notice of the hearing was mailed to the party's last known post office address.

(3) A party may request the board to reconsider its decision if a request for reconsideration is received by the board within 30 days after the party receives written notice of the board's decision by filing a written request with supporting information showing that an obvious mistake of fact or law which materially affects the outcome of the decision has occurred; or showing newly discovered evidence that was not obtainable with due diligence during the course of the hearing.

(4) A party may request that board consideration of a matter be postponed. The request shall be in writing and shall be served on the director and all other parties at least 3 business days before the date scheduled for board consideration of the matter.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.

**GAB 20.09 Temporary orders.** The board may issue a protective order or grant such protective relief as the board determines is necessary to preserve the rights of any party to a matter subject to this chapter before issuing a final decision or order.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.

**GAB 20.10 Service.** The director may accept service of any pleading on behalf of the board including civil actions commenced against the board.

**History:** Cr. Register, January, 1994, No. 457, eff. 2-1-94.